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(Kamma) Bojjaṅga Sutta

The (Karma) Discourse on the Awakening-factors | A 4.236 [A:B 4.238]
or Ariya, magga Sutta The Discourse on the Noble Path

Theme: Karma and the awakening-factors

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

1 Sutta significance**1.1 THEME**

1.1.1 The (Kamma) Bojjaṅga Sutta (A 4.236) is almost identical to **the (Kamma) Ariya Magga Sutta** (A 4.235),¹ differing only in the last category of karma. While **A 4.235** has the noble eightfold path in its last category of karma, **A 4.236** has the 7 awakening factors (*satta bojjaṅga*)—those of mindfulness, discernment of mental states, energy, joy, tranquility and equanimity. The eightfold path and the 7 awakening-factors, as we know, are two of the 7 sets of teachings of early Buddhism, constituting the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi, pakkhiya, dhamma*). [§5]

1.1.2 The 7 sets are as follows:

(1) The 4 focuses of mindfulness	<i>catu satipaṭṭhāna</i>	SD 13
(2) The 4 right strivings	<i>catu samma-p, padhāna</i>	SD 10.2
(3) The 4 bases of spiritual success	<i>catu iddhi, pāda</i>	SD 10.3
(4) The 5 spiritual faculties	<i>pañc'indriya</i>	SD 10.4
(5) The 5 spiritual powers	<i>pañca bala</i>	SD 10.5
(6) The 7 awakening-factors	<i>satta bojjaṅga</i>	SD 10.15
(7) The noble eightfold path	<i>ariya aṭṭh'ānika magga</i>	SD 10.16

Any of these 7 sets of dharma either works by itself or in connection with other sets to bring about awakening. Our Suttas here have applied 2 of these 7 sets, that is, the 7 awakening-factors and the noble eightfold path. In this case, either set can work in itself, or it is merely a matter of personal inclination which path we choose.²

1.2 ANALYSIS OF KARMA

The (Kamma) Ariya Magga Sutta (A 4.235) is almost identical to **the (Vitthāra) Kamma Sutta** (A 4.232).³ They differ only in their last sections on the “neither-dark-nor-bright karma” with like result “that conduces to the destruction of karma” [§5].⁴

While **A 4.235** has the noble eightfold path as its last section, **A 4.232** has “this intention to abandon” all the 3 kinds of karma mentioned. From this parallel structure, we can rightly deduce that the noble eightfold path is the equivalent or practice in full for the intention to abandon the 3 kinds of karma.⁵

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¹ A 4.235/2:236 f (SD 50.18).

² On the 7 sets, see SD 10.1.

³ A 4.232/2:230-232 (SD 4.13).

⁴ For details on the analysis of karma, see SD 50.18 (1.2).

⁵ For details, see SD 4.13 (3).

The (Karma) Discourse on the Awakening-factors

(A 4.236)

1 Bhikshus, there are these **4 kinds of karma** that have been declared by me, having realized them for myself with direct knowledge. What are the four?

The 4 kinds of karma

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|--|---|
| (1) There is, bhikshus, dark [black] karma with dark result. | <i>kamma kaṇha kaṇha, vipāka</i> |
| (2) There is, bhikshus, bright [white] karma with bright result. | <i>kamma sukka sukka, vipāka</i> |
| (3) There is, bhikshus, dark-and-bright karma with dark-and-bright result. | <i>kamma kaṇha, sukka kaṇha, sukka, vipāka</i> |
| (4) There is, bhikshus, neither-dark-nor-bright karma with neither-dark-nor-bright result,
karma which brings about the ending of karma. | <i>akaṇha, asukka akaṇha, asukka, vipāka
kammaṃ kamma-k, khāyāya saṃvattati</i> |

(1) Dark karma with dark result

2 And what, bhikshus, is **dark karma with dark result**?⁶

2.2 Here, bhikshus, one⁷

creates⁸ afflictive⁹ bodily formation [karma];
creates afflictive verbal formation;
creates afflictive mental formation.

*kaya, saṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti
vacī, saṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti
mano, saṅkhāraṃ abhisankharoti*

2.3 Having created *afflictive* bodily formation,
having created *afflictive* verbal formation,
having created *afflictive* mental formation,

one arises in an afflictive world.

2.4 When one has arisen into an afflictive world, afflictive contacts¹⁰ touch one.¹¹

2.5 When one is touched by such afflictive contacts,
one suffers afflictive feelings¹² that are entirely painful—as in the case of hell-beings.¹³

⁶ *Katamañ ca bhikkhave kammaṃ kaṇhaṃ kaṇha, vipakaṃ.*

⁷ “One,” *ekacco*, a certain (being).

⁸ “Creates,” or “generates,” *abhisankharoti*, ie, “to confer potential energy to something” (CPD), “to arrange, prepare.”

⁹ “Afflictive,” *sa, vyāpajjhaṃ*. Comy glosses as “with suffering” (*sa, dukkhaṃ*, AA 3:212).

¹⁰ “Contacts,” *phassā*, ie, dependent on the sense-organ and sense-object, sense-consciousness arises: the meeting of the three is contact (**Madhu, piṇḍika S**, M 18,16), SD 6.14. In short, these contacts are sense-experiences.

¹¹ “Contacts ... touch him,” *phassā phusanti*, ie, he is confronted by various acts of ill will.

¹² “He suffers feelings connected with ill will,” *sa, vyāpajjhaṃ vedanaṃ vediyati*. Comy: He suffers feelings connected with affliction (*s’ābādhaṃ*) (AA 3:212). The word *ābādha* has a range of meanings: pain, affliction, trouble, illness, sickness, disease, distress (CPD).

¹³ “That is to say, hell-beings,” *seyyathā’pi sattā nerayikā*. Bodhi: “In this passage (and the counterparts below) we can discover several of the main links in the formula of dependent origination: volitional formations bring about rebirth into an appropriate world (which is ultimately a constellation of consciousness and name-and-form), and once rebirth is established, contact gives rise to feeling. The sutta establishes that the world in which we arise, and

2.6 This, bhikshus, is called *dark karma with dark result*.

(2) Bright karma with bright result

3 And what, bhikshus, is **bright karma with bright result**?

3.2 Here, bhikshus, one

creates unafflictive¹⁴ bodily formation,¹⁵

creates unafflictive verbal formation,

creates unafflictive mental formation.

3.3 Having created *unafflictive* bodily formation,

Having created *unafflictive* verbal formation,

having created *unafflictive* mental formation,

one arises in an *unafflictive* world.

3.4 When one has arisen in an unafflictive world, *unafflictive* contacts touch one.

3.5 When one is touched by such unafflictive contacts,

one feels *unafflictive* feelings that are entirely pleasurable—as in the case of the Subha,kinhā devas.¹⁶

3.6 This, bhikshus, is called *bright karma with bright result*.

(3) Dark-and-bright karma with dark-and-bright result

4 And what, bhikshu, is **dark-and-bright karma with dark-and-bright result**?¹⁷

4.2 Here, bhikshus, one creates

bodily formation that is afflictive and that is unafflictive,

verbal formation that is afflictive and that is unafflictive,

mental formation that is afflictive and that is unafflictive.

4.3 Having created bodily formation that is *afflictive* and that is *unafflictive*,

having created verbal formation that is *afflictive* and that is *unafflictive*,

having created mental formation that is *afflictive* and that is *unafflictive*

one arises in a world that is both *afflictive* and *unafflictive*.

4.4 When one has arisen in a world that is afflictive and unafflictive, both *afflictive* and *unafflictive* contacts touch one.

4.5 When one is touched by afflictive and unafflictive contacts,

one feels *afflictive* and *unafflictive* feelings, those that are painful and those that are pleasant, those filled and mixed with pain and pleasure¹⁸—as in the case of humans, and some devas,¹⁹ and some lower-world beings.²⁰

the affective quality of our experience within that world, reflect the nature of our actions in previous existences.” (A:B 296 n86). In other words, one need not actually fall into “hell” (as a place beyond here and now) to suffer hellish pains.

¹⁴ “Unafflictive” (*avyāpajjha*) is throughout used as the opposite of “afflictive” (*vyāpajjha*). “Unafflictive” refers to the opp of “afflictive,” whereas “non-afflictive” means “that which is *not* afflictive, as well as the neither afflictive nor not afflictive, ie, neutral karma.”

¹⁵ “Bodily formation,” *kāya,saṅkhāra = kāya,kamma* (bodily karma).

¹⁶ The Subha,kinhā devas (“radiant glory”) inhabit the highest of 3rd dhyana heavens. See (1.2.1 (2)) n above.

¹⁷ *Katamañ ca bhikkhave kammaṃ kaṇhaṃ kaṇha,vipakaṃ*. Here, the Pali is *vipakaṃ*, which is singular; hence, we need to take “result” as an uncountable n. Such karmic results can be *either* painful or pleasant *or* perceived as painful or pleasant, depending on the mental state of the person.

¹⁸ *So sa,vyāpajjhehi pi avyāpajjhehi pi phassehi phuttho samāno sa,vyāpajjhaṃ pi avyāpajjham pi vedanaṃ vediyati vokiṇṇaṃ saṅkiṇṇaṃ sukha,dukkhaṃ*.

4.6 This, bhikshus, is called *dark-and-bright karma with dark-and-bright result*.

(4) Neither-dark-nor-bright karma with neither-dark-nor-bright result

5 And what, bhikshus, is **neither-dark-nor-bright karma with neither-dark-nor-bright result** that brings about the ending of karma?²¹

5.2 (They are as follows:)

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) The awakening-factor that is | mindfulness. | <i>sati,sambojjhaṅga</i> |
| (2) The awakening-factor that is | dharma-investigation. | <i>dhamma.vicaya,sambojjhaṅga</i> |
| (3) The awakening-factor that is | effort. | <i>vīriya,sambojjhaṅga</i> |
| (4) The awakening-factor that is | zest [joy]. | <i>pīti,sambojjhaṅga</i> |
| (5) The awakening-factor that is | tranquility. | <i>passaddhi,sambojjhaṅga</i> |
| (6) The awakening-factor that is | samadhi [concentration]. | <i>samādhi,sambojjhaṅga</i> |
| (7) The awakening-factor that is | equanimity. | <i>upekkhā,sambojjhaṅga</i> |

5.3 This, bhikshus, is called *neither-dark-nor-bright karma with neither-dark-nor-bright result that brings about the ending of karma*.

6 These, bhikshus, are the 4 kinds of karma that have been declared by me, having realized them for myself with direct knowledge.

— evaṃ —

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¹⁹ Comy: The devas of the sense-world who are happy in their own sphere, but unhappy when they observe the still greater happiness of the higher devas (AA 3:213).

²⁰ *Seyyathā'pi manussā ekacce ca devā ekacce ca vinīpātikā*. See (1.2.1 (3)) n above.

²¹ *Katamañ ca bhikkhave kammaṃ akaṇham-asukkaṃ akaṇha,asukka,kamma-k,khayāya sarivattati*. On the difference between this Sutta (A 4.235) and A 4.232, see (1.1.2).